Moore, Mayor.

Martis xxxi^o. die *Januarii*, 1681.
Annoq; Regni Regis *CAROLI*
Secundi, *Angliæ*, &c. xxxiv.

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A

SERMON

Preach'd before the

Lord Mayor,

AND THE

Court of ALDERMEN,

AT

GUILD-HALL Chappel,

ON

The 29th. of *January*, 168½.

By *THOMAS SPRAT*, D. D.
One of his Majesties Chaplains in Ordinary.

LONDON:
Printed by *M. C.* for *Joanna Brome*, at the Gun in St. *Paul's* Church-yard, 1682.

To the Right Honorable

Sir *JOHN MOORE*, Kt.

Lord Mayor of the City of *London*;

And to the

Right Worſhipful the ALDERMEN His Brethren.

My Lord,

THough the *favour of your Commands is an abundant Excuſe for my Printing this very plain Sermon*: *yet, I doubt, I need ſome Apology for Preaching it in ſuch an Auditory, as I had the honor that day to ſerve. I fear, it might ſeem a preſumption for me to diſcourſe on this Subject, in the preſence of the Reverend Judges of the Land, the Learned Serjeants of the Law, and the wiſe Governors of your Great and Honorable City: An Aſſembly of men, from whoſe Wiſdom and Experience ſuch as I might better learn the Doctrine, and Practice of* Righteouſneſs, and Mercy.

I can only ſay, that as it was my Duty, ſo it was my Endeavour to treat of this Argument meerly as a

Divine. I design'd not to persuade you to these Virtues by the Principles of Humane Prudence; which such a Congregation could not be suppos'd to want; but rather to confirm you in them by the Obligations and Promises of our Holy Religion: which is the proper business of my Profession.

It was therefore enough for me, in that place, on that Text, to perform the part not so much of a Teacher, as of a Remembrancer. And I have attain'd my end, if I have laid before you some of the chief Praises, and Rewards, that the Scriptures bestow on these two excellent Graces: whereof you, that heard me, are so much more able to give Rule, and, what is much better, Example to the World.

My Lord, I am

Your Lordships most Humble,

and most Obedient Servant,

Tho. Sprat.

A SERMON

Preach'd before the

Lord Mayor, &c.

PROVERBS XXI. 21.

He that followeth after righteousness, and mercy, findeth life, righteousness, and honor.

IN these words there are two most eminent Vertues recommended to us: one the most useful, the other the most amiable, of all that we can acquire towards our being, or well being, in this life or the next: Righteousness, the best of all Natural Virtues; nay, it is a Christian Grace: Mercy, the most excellent of all Christian Graces.

These two are here represented to our earnest pursuit, not in the severe stile of a strict command,

nor in the rigid terms of a legal precept. Though if God had only thus required them of us, they had deſerved our moſt dutiful Obedience, conſidering the high prerogative the Almighty Law-giver has over us. But here they are ſet off to us in the ſtile of the Goſpel, in the gentle, alluring and delightful form of a Promiſe. That, which is our neceſſary duty, is attended with a free, ample, immenſe reward.

The Duty is double, *The following after Righteouſneſs*: *The following after Mercy*. The Reward is treble, *Life, Righteouſneſs, and Honor*: according to the uſual method of Gods gracious dealings with men. His Promiſes always go beyond our performances: his Rewards both in weight, and number, by far exceed our duties.

Of theſe ſtudies of *Righteouſneſs and Mercy* we ſhould all be followers, as we are men; we all profeſs our ſelves to be followers, as we are Chriſtians. What then can be a more proper work for us all, in this our ſolemn meeting, either as men, or as Chriſtians, than to reaſon with our ſelves, concerning this whole matter, to convince our judgments of the neceſſity of theſe duties, to excite our affections towards them, by the greatneſs of their reward?

To this purpoſe, be pleaſed that I examine,

First,

First, What are the two things, which are here propoſed to our zelous proſecution?

Secondly, What is the way, the beſt way of following after them?

Thirdly, Let us encourage one another in their attainment, by the largeneſs of the recompence, which is here aſſured to us from the mouth of Divine Wiſdom it ſelf.

My Text, you ſee, conſiſting of a two-fold Duty, and a three-fold Reward, the Duty comes firſt to be conſidered in both its parts; *Righteouſneſs and Mercy.* Both which *Solomon* the wiſe King has here moſt wiſely put together, and in their right order. For wherever they both are, Righteouſneſs is the foundation of Mercy, Mercy is the ornament of Righteouſneſs. And neither of them can be complete without the other. Whatever is not juſt can never be merciful: Whatever is meerly, ſtrictly juſt, without any compaſſion, it is to a Proverb highly injurious: it is that which the Scripture calls a being *righteous overmuch.* Eccleſ. vii. 16.

The word Righteouſneſs has ſeveral different ſignifications in the Old, and the New Teſtament. In the Old it ſometimes paſſes for all manner of Goodneſs, frequently for the particular virtue of Juſtice. In the New it commonly

ſignifies the ſame; and beſides, it is often raiſed to a higher meaning, to expreſs the glorious myſtery of our Juſtification by Chriſt, and the ſpiritual Grace which attends it.

I believe, my Text is moſt to be underſtood of that kind of Righteouſneſs, by which is meant, integrity of Actions, and honeſty of Converſation, in all our public, and private relations in this world. And ſo I ſhall chiefly handle it. Though indeed the other more Divine Interpretation of the Word ought not wholly to be excluded, in our preſent meditations. For to all I ſhall ſay on this argument, it muſt be premiſed, that without the Righteouſneſs of Chriſt, to conſecrate all our own righteouſneſs, and mercy, and to make them acceptable to God, it were a vain preſumption for any man to think he can deſerve by them, upon their own account, either *honor*, or *righteouſneſs*, or *life* it ſelf.

But firſt, I begin with *Righteouſneſs*, as it is taken in the uſual *ſenſe* of the Old Teſtament: for common Juſtice, and moral Honeſty, and obedience to good Laws.

In explaining the nature of this Virtue, it would be no very modeſt undertaking, for me to make a large diſcourſe, before this venerable Aſſembly; where I ſpeak to thoſe, whoſe buſi-

neſs

neſs it is, not only to inſtruct, but to regulate, and ſteer the whole Nation in the practice of it. Only for our clearer proceeding, ſomething muſt be ſaid concerning it.

I humbly conceive, a thing, or perſon may be call'd right, or righteous, or juſt, either by reaſon it is ſo, originally, and independently in its own being; or becauſe it is conformable to ſome certain Rule of a Superior Being; by compariſon to whoſe perfection, the moral ſtraitneſs, or crookedneſs of all inferior things ought to be judg'd.

Now nothing can be abſolutely righteous, and primitively juſt, but only God himſelf; who is the ſole Author of all Truth, and Juſtice, the only Donor of it to us. His infinite underſtanding is the only cauſe, and meaſure of all Truth. His unerring will is the only Fountain, and unalterable Standard of all Righteouſneſs.

As therefore this will of God is diſplay'd in ſeveral manifeſtations to mankind, ſo, according to the reſemblance of our wills, and actions to his will thus manifeſted, there may, and ought to be various kinds of righteouſneſs amongſt men.

As the will of God expreſſes it ſelf, to our own hearts in the dictates of rectify'd nature,

and right reaſon: ſo an obſervance of that will is natural, and moral Righteouſneſs. As the will of God is declared in his written Word, ſo a ſubmiſſion to that Will is Religious Righteouſneſs. As the will of God appears in the images, and repreſentatives of Gods power on earth, ſo an obedience to their Laws is Political, nay, it is Religious Righteouſneſs too: as far as thoſe Laws do not tranſgreſs the higher principles of Gods Natural, Moral, or Divine Laws.

This ſeems to be the nature of Righteouſneſs in general. And this three-fold declaration of Gods will, either written in our own Hearts, or ſpoken in his Word, or pronounced in the Voice of lawful Authority, is the moſt certain, if not the only Foundation of that diſtinction between right, and wrong, equity, and injuty, by which all mankind is to be directed in all conditions, either as Superiors, Equals, or Inferiors.

And now that this moſt commendable vertue may not paſs among any of us, as it has with too many in our days, only for an Old Teſtament Duty, rather belonging to a moral man, than to a Chriſtian; give me leave to put you in mind, how eſſential it is to Chriſtianity it ſelf; what commendations and privileges the Holy Scripture aſcribes to it; what high rank and

dignity

dignity it holds in Gods Statute-Book, as well as in mens; and that not only in the Law, but in the Goſpel; and not only ſpiritual Righteouſneſs, but natural, and political Righteouſneſs too.

If we ſhall reflect on the whole progreſs, and all the revolutions of Gods diſpenſations to mankind, we may eaſily obſerve, he has always proceeded with us, not only according to the unaccountable purpoſes of his own ſecret will, whoſe Judgments are unſearchable, and its ways paſt finding out: But he has dealt with us, as after the manner of a God, by his infinite mercy, ſo, as I may ſay, after the manner of men too, by a ſtanding, plain, declared, written Rule of Juſtice and Righteouſneſs; by truth of Contract, by Covenant, a double Covenant, in which we might know what is his, what ours by his gift: a Covenant, in which we might underſtand our work, and, if we perform it well, may claim our recompence.

Thus the great Creator of Heaven and Earth, who has an unlimited Dominion and Sovereignty over the works of his hands, is yet ſo much delighted to have mankind govern'd by known Laws, that he himſelf was pleas'd, if I may ſo ſpeak with reverence, to bound, and circumſcribe

that

that part of his own Omnipotence, by the like method.

And in the firſt, moſt public appearance of Gods preſence to the world, as ſoon as he had choſen to himſelf a peculiar people, when he began to eſtabliſh a ſetled Religion, did not then his care of common Juſtice, and civil Rights keep an equal pace with his proviſion for his own Worſhip? were his firſt Laws to the Jews, Ceremonial, and Ritual only, relating to his own Service alone? were they not Judicial, and Moral alſo, reſpecting as well the peace and proſperity of Humane Society? of all which Laws, did not God himſelf ſeem to give the advantage to this latter kind? he did, in this at leaſt, that his own Ceremonial Law, which he then preſcrib'd, was ſometime to be aboliſh'd, but his Moral Law never.

For upon his ſecond, more perfect, and laſt Revelation of Religion in the Goſpel, the way of his own Divine Service was indeed much alter'd, but not any one common Rule of Humane Juſtice: no abrogation of any one precept of Righteouſneſs or Honeſty followed upon the great reformation from Judaiſm to Chriſtianity, but rather a new addition of more ſtrength, and authority to them all.

Who-

Whoever ſhall recollect the whole matter, and deſign of our Bleſſed Saviours Preaching, can he poſſibly think otherwiſe? Does not the whole ſum of his Divine Doctrine ſeem well nigh calculated, and fitted as much to eſtabliſh, and direct the Courts of Legiſlators, and the Seats of Juſtice; as for the Temple, and the Pulpit? Were not all his Sermons, eſpecially his great Sermon on the *Mount*, a perfect Comment on the ancient precepts of Righteouſneſs, and Mercy? Does he not there free them all, one by one, from groſs corruptions? Does he not vindicate them all by moſt genuine interpretations? Does he not eſtabliſh them all by ſeverer puniſhments, and more glorious rewards? Eſpecially did he not exemplifie them all, by his own moſt innocent, juſt, unblamable, and merciful life?

Thus confirm'd, thus advanc'd, did our Bleſſed Saviour deliver down the common Rules of Right and Juſtice; and thus the ſame Rules have continued unchangeable in all ſucceſſions of the Chriſtian Church; never hindring the great deſign of Chriſtianity, but exceedingly promoting it, and being themſelves incorporated into it: So that all along the ſame *do, as you would be done to*, the ſame definitions of

Reaſon, and Righteouſneſs; the ſame general precepts of Honeſty in Commerce, and Judicial Proceedings; the ſame Laws of Ruling, and Obeying, have been common to Chriſtians with the wiſeſt Heathen Nations: or wherever there was any difference, the Chriſtian Laws of this kind were the ſtricter, and the practice of them too amongſt Chriſtians for many ages was, as their Principles require it ever to be, far more exact.

Whatever our new Saints, that are only ſo of their own making, have deviſed, was it ever ſo much as queſtion'd amongſt the Apoſtles, and Primitive Saints, whether the new Law of the Goſpel, tho that be ſtiled in Scripture, *the Royal Law of Liberty*; whether that did infranchiſe and ſet any man looſe from the precepts of internal Virtue and Goodneſs, or of external Submiſſion to Civil Government, and internal too? A queſtion indeed there was concerning the Ceremonial Law, Whether that were to be extinguiſh'd? and that carried in the Affirmative: a queſtion there was alſo concerning the Moral Law, and legal Righteouſneſs, Whether that alone could juſtifie a Chriſtian? and that determin'd in the Negative. But never did any ſober Chriſtian doubt, whether the Moral Law did oblige under the Goſpel or no.

Cer-

Certainly, till after a thouſand years, the Romiſh Tyranny prevailed over weak Princes, and blind People, never did any Church of Chriſt, or pretended Head of any, take to it ſelf a prerogative to exempt the Chriſtian Church from due Obedience to the Temporal Power; much leſs to ſet up a Spiritual Power above the Temporal, nay, with a pretended right to Advance or Depoſe the Temporal. Certainly never, till the Anabaptiſtical madneſs, and Enthuſiaſtical phrenſies of theſe laſt Ages, did any Members of the Church of Chriſt, preſume upon an extraordinary Purity, and Holineſs of their own, to declare themſelves Abſolved, by a Spiritual Light within them, from the eternal Bonds of Reaſon, Right, and Juſtice, to which we are all indiſpenſably obliged, not only as we are men, but much more as we are Chriſtians.

And to manifeſt the juſt Judgment of God againſt them all for theſe Uſurpations, is it not very obſervable, that the very ſame men, who moſt of all men, that call themſelves Chriſtians, have invaded the rights of publick Government, and private Virtue, the Romaniſts on the one ſide, the Enthuſiaſts on the other, the very ſame men have made the greateſt Invaſions

on Religion it ſelf? the one on its Purity, the other on its Unity?

Thoſe of the Church of *Rome*, Pope *Hildebrand*, and His Followers, who aſſum'd a Dominion, and Supremacy over all Temporal Laws, did not they firſt exalt themſelves in the Temple of God, above all that is called God, above the Scripture it ſelf, the expreſs Law of God? The Anabaptiſts in *Germany*, and their Succeſſors, of whatever Name or Sect, who firſt falſly boaſted, that their inward Sanctity, and Inſpirations did ſet them above *the low rudiments, and beggerly elements of this world*, as they miſcall'd the Obligations of Virtue, and Obedience: did the ſame men reſt ſatisfied there? Did they not at the ſame time, profeſs, that all ſober Piety, and decent Worſhip, and intelligible Religion, was as groſs, and carnal, and Antichriſtian, and as grievous to their ſpirits, as they had pronounced all the Ordinances of Civil Government, and moral Virtue to be?

But, God be praiſed! neither of theſe abominable examples, is of ſufficient Authority, or Antiquity, to make a Preſident, againſt the conſtant, univerſal practice of the whole uncorrupt Chriſtian, as well as Jewiſh Inſtitution. Still therefore the ſame obſervation holds good, that

that Juſtice and Piety, Righteouſneſs and Religion came into the world together. In their beginning they were brought forth as Twins, the moſt beloved Children of the moſt high, the moſt likely Off-ſpring of Heaven. And as they were Contemporaries at firſt, ſo they have been all along educated together; both cheriſh'd alike by God himſelf, both obſerved alike by all wiſe, holy, and good men.

Nor indeed could it well be otherwiſe. For the mutual agreement between Juſtice, and Piety is inſeparable: The perpetual union of Righteouſneſs and Religion is moſt neceſſary. The Principles on which they both ſubſiſt, the ends, which they would both produce, are the ſame, or ſubordinate one to the other. Are not true Reaſon, and the Word of God ſome of the chief Principles of true Righteouſneſs? ſo they are of true Religion. Are not the Glory of God, and the happineſs of mankind the ends of Religion? ſo they are of Righteouſneſs. Religion indeed does carry the bleſſed work much farther; undertakes to finiſh it in another life. But Righteouſneſs begins it in this life, and performs its part ſo well, that without it, Religion it ſelf could have little, or no real influence on the Conſciences of its Diſciples.

Was not mankind a Society, as ſoon as it was a Church? and Righteouſneſs contributed to make it a Society, as Religion did to make it a Church. Was it not Righteouſneſs that firſt made men begin to confide in one another? to commit their private Safety, and Profit to each others Fidelity? That therefore was the common parent of all other Virtues: That firſt peopled the world: That firſt drew, and enticed men into Houſes, and Cities, and then ſecured them there: and ſo divided mankind from beaſts in conditions, as well as habitations. Certainly it was Righteouſneſs, as a part of natural Religion, that firſt made men to be men: and ſo prepared, and then deliver'd them over to reveal'd Religion, and at laſt to be made Chriſtians, and Saints.

If Righteouſneſs had not temper'd, and ſoften'd, and reconciled humane nature within it ſelf: no creature had been more fierce, and ſalvage, than the Sons of *Adam*: none would have had more vehement paſſions to deſire miſchief; none more cunning to contrive it; none a greater power to effect it.

If we take Righteouſneſs out of the heart of a man, we leave nothing there of the image of God, after which he was created. Take Righteouſneſs

ouſneſs out of a private Family; and it ſoon turns into a den of Thieves. Take Righteouſneſs out of a State; and that only, becomes a more regular, more politic, more combin'd, and therefore a more pernicious ſociety of mighty Robbers. Take Righteouſneſs out of the World; and the world would not deſerve to be call'd, as it was at firſt, the complete work of God's hands; but a Chaos ſtill, or a rude Foreſt, or Wilderneſs; or ſomething worſe: For to be inhabited only by rapine, and violence, is worſe, than to be only an innocent, unfrequented Deſart.

Thus whatever increaſe of Civil Arts, whatever flouriſhing of populous Nations, whatever intercourſe between people and people has been practis'd to ſupply the neceſſities, conveniences, and Ornaments of humane life: they were all at firſt founded on Righteouſneſs. From that are derived to us all our temporal Bleſſings: without that, we could never have enjoyed the means of our eternal Bleſſings. For where there is no true Righteouſneſs, there can be no true humanity, no civility, no kindneſs of men to one another: and by conſequence, no true Religion. For all true Religion is always accompanied with ſome true humanity: wherever the

power

power of Chriſtianity comes, it either finds ſome civility, or makes it. What is that which immediately follows *Glory to God on high? peace on earth, good will towards men.* And where there is no Righteouſneſs, there can be no good will; where there is no good will of men to one another, there can be no place, or no well-grounded hope of Gods good will to men.

This is the firſt thing in my Text, *Righteouſneſs*; a virtue ſo beneficial, ſo neceſſary to mankind; ſo highly valued of God himſelf. This deals with men, as men, upon the ſquare, upon even terms; juſtly expecting a like return of good offices. The next is *Mercy*. But that has more of ſuperiority, and majeſty in it. That takes men on the greateſt diſadvantage, with the greateſt generoſity: when they are either miſerable by diſtreſſes, or obnoxious by injuries, relieves the one, pardons the other. Whatever therefore I have ſaid, or can be ſaid in praiſe of Righteouſneſs; ſtill the chief place in our praiſes, and practice, ought to be reſerved for *Mercy*. Great indeed is the extent of both theſe together. All below Righteouſneſs, is ſin: nothing is above Mercy. So that both together comprehend the whole compaſs of mens duty to one another, from the loweſt to the higheſt

higheſt part of it; which may be all contained in two words, Honeſty, and Charity; that is, the *Righteouſneſs*, and *Mercy* in my Text.

Thus they are beſt together. But if conſider'd aſunder, or compared, then Mercy muſt triumph over, and *rejoyce againſt judgment*. Righteouſneſs is a virtue unblamable: Mercy is a grace moſt lovely, and honorable. Righteouſneſs obliges us to yield to other men their own: Mercy inclines us to give them our own too: and what can be more? Righteouſneſs makes you not to be enemies to others unjuſtly: Mercy makes you not to be enemies to your enemies: nay, to be their Friends, their Benefactors, even their Gods. S. James ii. 13.

Moſt certainly, as *he ſhall have judgment without mercy, that hath ſhewed no mercy*: ſo God will requite Mercy with the greateſt Mercy; for he will requite even Righteouſneſs with Mercy. Of all the Divine Attributes, God is delighted to exerciſe his mercy to men, more than any, nay than all the reſt: and therefore he cannot but eſteem mercy in men above all other humane endowments. So eſſential, ſo dear is Mercy to God himſelf, that in his own inexpreſſibly-Divine Nature, he ſeems to give it ſome ſpecial preeminence over all his other perfections: though, S. James ii. 13.

no doubt, they are in themſelves all equally Divine and Infinite.

For the ſake of his Mercy, God ſeems willing to change his own eternal mind, which is undoubtedly immutable. It is ſaid, *He repented according to the multitude of his mercies.* When he injoyns it us, he prefers it before his own Worſhip: He ſays, *I will have mercy, and not ſacrifice.* His Mercy may be ſaid to ſweeten his Holineſs, to moderate his Power, to delay, to ſtop his Revenge, to enlarge, beyond all proportion, his diſtributive, and, after all provocations, to reſtrain his vindicative Juſtice. His Mercy God often employs, without any the leaſt mixture of his ſevere Attributes; But he ſeldom, or never exerciſes any of them in this world, ſo as utterly, irreparably to exclude his Mercy: *In the midſt of judgments, he remembers mercy.*

Pſal. cvi. 45.

S. Mat. ix. 13.

The two great Attributes, by which God condeſcends to govern all humane affairs, are his Power, or his Mercy. But an Almighty Power alone had been rather dreadful, than auſpicious to mankind. It might have fill'd mens minds with fear, and terror, and have frighted them into a ſervile compliance. 'Tis only mercy added to power, that brings authority with it; and charms mens hearts into a willing obedience.

Which

Which of these two God himself prefers, can we have a clearer instance, than in the persons and administrations of *Moses*, and our Blessed Saviour? *Moses* the Vice-gerent of Gods Power; our Saviour of his Mercy: *Moses* the Servant of God; our Saviour the Son of God, nay, God himself.

During the Ministry of *Moses*, we read much of Countries laid wast, of Nations plagued, of the First-born cut off, of Kingdoms and Armies over-whelm'd and destroy'd. Then Religion seem'd rather inclined to terrifie the world, than to pardon it; to inforce a Law, than to persuade it; to subdue enemies, than to make friends. But at the appearance of our Blessed Saviour, Religion seem'd on a sudden reconciled to the whole world; and not only to require by its Divinity, but to deserve by its Clemency the love and reverence of all mankind. For in our Saviours works, though there were undeniable Testimonies of his unlimited Power, yet there were more of his boundless Mercy: though both in him were infinite, yet his Mercy was most apparent.

Such is Mercy, so wonderful, adorable, and universal, in the first great example, and most perfect Original of it, God himself! 'Tis well

for us that it is ſo. And ſuch in truth of imitation, ſhould be the imperfect Copies, that we take of it from him. Though we cannot come near that Mercy in any meaſure of equality: yet we ſhould all ſtrive to reſemble it, if we would partake of it: *To be merciful as our heavenly Father is merciful.* As he is merciful! Yes. As his *mercy is over all his own works*, and above all our ſins: So ſhould our mercy be, in our weak degree of proportion; above all our own good works to other men; above all other mens ill works, and offences againſt us. This is the only way, for us frail, and ſinful creatures, to be like our heavenly Father, in that very thing, in which he is moſt our Father, moſt our heavenly Father.

S. Luke vi. 36. Pſ. cxlv. 9.

Theſe then are the two great Duties here recommended, both the principal things in Heaven and Earth. Nothing brings Heaven down ſo near to Earth: nothing raiſes Earth ſo much toward Heaven. What then can be done better on Earth? What more worthy of Heaven, than to follow after them both? and what is it *to follow after them*, in a right manner, in a true Scripture ſenſe? which is my ſecond Head propoſed.

We

We read it, according to the Hebrew, *He that followeth after Righteouſneſs, and Mercy.* The Septuagint render it, *The way of Righteouſneſs and Mercy, ſhall find,* &c. Indeed whoever would rightly purſue theſe, or any other graces, they muſt do it, in a way; not by ſecret ſhifts, and turnings; not in by-paths, or indirectly; not after any private fancy, or ſpirit; but by a trodden, direct, lawful Rule: Let me ſay it, in the Kings High-way. Thus every man ought to be righteous to all men, equally, and indifferently, not only to his own Friends, or Sect, or Party. We may, 'tis true be merciful to ſome men more than to others, according to our opportunities, or obligations, or diſcretion: But then ſtill we ſhould be exceedingly careful, that we be not unmerciful to any man.

Ὁδὸς δικαιοσύνης, καὶ ἐλεημοσύνης εὑρήσει, &c

Thus to *follow after* theſe things is to ſet about their performance, ſpeedily, zelouſly, indefatigably, with the whole man, in all our thoughts, words, and actions; eſpecially the men of this world, as Chriſtian men of this world, plainly, and ſincerely to ſet your minds, your tongues, your hands, your feet, to the work: with the cleareſt conviction of your underſtandings, that they ought to be practis'd, but chiefly with the moſt ardent, and unwearied affections of your

hearts, in the practice: For it is the heart, it is practice, that God moſt regards.

And *to follow after* both theſe graces aright, is to practiſe them both in their ſeaſons, and proportions: never to divide two ſuch things, which God himſelf has ſo nearly joyn'd in his Commands; in his own incomprehenſible Godhead has indiſſolubly united them: ſo we to conjoyn, and mingle them both together; never to omit either of them, on a pretence, that it is for the ſake of the other; but with the moſt charitable, and harmonious mixture of both in one, to ſeaſon, to ſtrengthen, to juſtifie all our mercy with Righteouſneſs; to qualifie, to allay, to ſweeten all our righteouſneſs with Mercy.

And thus really *to follow after* both theſe things, in Scripture-Language, is, really to obtain them. So gracious, and benign are the expreſſions of the Holy Ghoſt in theſe matters, that your unfeigned labor, and well-directed induſtry in the ways of grace, and goodneſs, brings with it an infallible ſucceſs: Your very endeavours after them, if uncounterfeit, and perſevering, are often here taken for the effect it ſelf. So gently, ſo compaſſionately does our good, and only wiſe God condeſcend to meet our infirmities, that his Grace does often prevent our diligence;

gence; never fails it, never comes ſhort of it.

Let us but *knock, and the gate of divine Mercy* S. Mat. *ſhall be open'd to us; Let us but ſeek, and we ſhall* vii. 7. *find: Let us but ask, and we ſhall have: Let us but follow after, and we ſhall overtake.* Nay farther yet, God will not only give us the very things, we ask, and ſeek, and follow after: but he often ſuper-adds the recompence of them at the ſame time: oftentimes accompanies, and ſets off his graces, not only with their own peculiar gifts, and advantages; but accumulates more, heaps upon them many other remote bleſſings.

Of which moſt bounteous method of Gods diſpenſations to mankind, *Solomon*, the wiſe Author of this ſentence in my Text, of all men living in his time, had the greateſt experience. For when God entirely left it to his will, which he would chooſe, either Wiſdom, or Wealth, or Power, or Victory; and he had made the beſt choice in preferring Wiſdom: God did not only plentifully beſtow that upon him, but over and above caſt in all the other good things, which in compariſon to Wiſdom, he himſelf had rejected. God ſaid to him, *Becauſe* 1 Kings] *thou haſt asked for thy ſelf this thing, and haſt not ask'd* iii. *for thy ſelf long life, neither haſt ask'd riches for thy ſelf, nor haſt ask'd the life of thine enemies, but haſt*

ask'd

ask'd for thy ſelf underſtanding to diſcern judgment; behold, I have done according to thy words: Lo! I have given thee a wiſe, and an underſtanding heart: ſo that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee ſhall any ariſe like unto thee. And I have alſo, ſays God, *given thee that which thou haſt not ask'd, both riches and honor. And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my Statutes, and my Commandments, then I will alſo lengthen thy days.*

So that *Solomon*, of all men, was the fitteſt man to continue his own obſervation of Gods infinite goodneſs in this kind, upon Sacred Record to all generations. And therefore as God had proved to him, concerning Wiſdom, and Underſtanding, ſo he pronounces here of *Righteouſneſs, and Mercy*, without which the higheſt underſtanding is Craft, not Prudence; the greateſt ſeeming Wiſdom is Subtilty, and Artifice, not Wiſdom.

Of *Righteouſneſs and Mercy*, he affirms in my Text, not only that he, who follows after them ſhall find *Righteouſneſs and Mercy* themſelves: though that were much; much more than any other ſtudy can boaſt of, that all our ſearch ſhall never be in vain: But here that is ſuppoſed, as out of all queſtion: much more is ſaid: not only that he who follows after *Righteouſneſs and*

Mercy

Mercy ſhall find, but findeth, what? not only *Righteouſneſs*, *and Mercy*, but moreover *Life*, *Righteouſneſs and Honor*. You ſhall not only poſſeſs theſe Virtues, if you ſincerely purſue them, but you ſhall enjoy, ſo ſurely, that you may be ſaid already to enjoy, the happy fruits of that purſuit, which are *Life*, *Righteouſneſs*, *and Honor*.

That is my third, and laſt particular, the Rewards, enſuing the right following after theſe duties, which, you ſee, are far more than equal to the duties themſelves. But what if theſe Virtues had come ſingle, and alone, without any ſuch bleſſed train of promiſes, or bright attendance of rewards? how ought we to have been affected towards them even then?

Out of all controverſie, we ought ſtill to have followed after them moſt earneſtly, to have embraced them moſt willingly, for their own ſakes, for their own true worth, and unvaluable beauty. Nor need we to fetch arguments from the Chriſtian Principles, to perſuade us to this. Thus much even the wiſe, and good men amongſt the Gentiles have taught us. They ſcarce thought any Philoſophy worthy of a man, that did not oblige him to love Juſtice, and Bounty, and all other Virtues, for themſelves, for their inward benefit, and inviſible excellence.

And if the very Heathens could have ſuch juſt apprehenſions of things, under their obſcure, and imperfect light; what ſhame would it be to us Chriſtians, if we ſhould not far exceed them? what reproach, if we ſhould ſcarce equal them? what hainous ſcandal, if we ſhould come ſhort of them, in our opinions, and practice of theſe things? if we ſhould think Virtue of it ſelf to be leſs praiſe-worthy than they did, or leſs its own reward?

Yet ſince our moſt gracious Maſter, our moſt indulgent Father has thought fit to add ſo much to theſe ſelf-ſufficient Duties; we may thankfully accept of thoſe promiſes: we may lawfully look to that recompence of reward, that recompence, which we could not deſerve. And we ought therefore to double our induſtry, which is ſo doubly, ſo manifoldly requited; moſt diligently to follow after *Righteouſneſs, and Mercy*: ſince they are things in themſelves ſo deſirable, ſo advantageous, ſo ineſtimable in their Rewards.

First, *Of Life, and Honor.*

As I ſaid before of the word *Righteouſneſs*, ſo I muſt now ſay of the words *Life, and Honor*: they have different meanings in the Old, and New

New Teſtament. Under the Law, *Life*, and *Honor*, and moſt other legal promiſes; were, I do not ſay only, but commonly underſtood in a literal ſenſe; for temporal Proſperity, and ſecular happineſs. But the Goſpel, as it has rais'd the things themſelves much higher, ſo it has proportionably advanc'd the words. And therefore in the Goſpel, though temporal felicity be not at all obſtructed, but rather exceedingly promoted by it, yet *Life*, and *Honor*, and moſt other Evangelical promiſes, are moſt frequently to be taken in a more ſublime, and Divine ſenſe; for life immortal, honors unſpeakable, joys full of glory.

I cannot now in Juſtice, but apply this promiſe to my preſent ſubject, in its full extent, in both its ſenſes: For moſt ſurely *Righteouſneſs and Mercy* are able to entitle you all to both theſe lives, to both theſe honors, both here, and hereafter.

The firſt kind of *Life*, and *Honor*, which is peace of days, increaſe of dignity, and reputation in this world, all thoſe bleſſings theſe Virtues may claim, as their due, and right; as their own by purchaſe, and deſert, though not from God, yet from all mankind. And in fact they are ſeldom diſpoſſeſt of them, but by great injury,

ry, or extraordinary misfortune, or, to ſpeak in the Chriſtian language, by ſome hidden purpoſe of Divine Providence.

Nor is this only the prerogative of *Righteouſneſs and Mercy*. But, though this may at firſt ſeem a paradox, yet it is a privilege common to all other Virtues, that as they have great, and juſt expectations of a future recompence, ſo they are uſually accompanied with ſome very conſiderable temporal good, and advantage. And it is the unavoidable, inſupportable miſery of all vice, that as its proſpect into another world is moſt diſmal, ſo its condition in this is ever ſome way, or other very uncomfortable.

Whatever flattering, and deceitful ſhapes ſin may put on, yet it can never ſo diſſemble all its defects, ſo hide all its deformities, but ſtill when we come to our ſelves, when the charm is over, we may ſee, and muſt confeſs, that all wickedneſs is followed cloſe by ſome very great, notorious, temporal puniſhment, and diſadvantage. Some bring loſs of credit, contempt, infamy, hatred: as diſhoneſty, cruelty, corruption, oppreſſion, inordinate ambition: which very commonly fails of that vain honor, it unduly graſps at, and loſes that quiet life, of which before it was calmly poſſeſt. Some bring loſs of health,

health, decay of bodily ſtrength, and pleaſure, which they only ſeem to conſult. As Luxury, and Riot bring ſickneſs and diſeaſes: they make men moſt unfit for death, and yet moſt haſten it. Some bring loſs of earthly riches, as Prodigality, and Intemperance; which Poverty purſues as an armed man: ſo that men often loſe their hopes of another world, not ſo much, as for the good things of this world, but even by throwing away their ſhare in this world too. Nay, Covetouſneſs does the ſame: by a greedineſs of getting more, it deprives it ſelf of the true ends of getting: it loſes the uſe, and enjoyment of what it had got.

Thus every Vice has its dark ſhadow, ſome evil genius haunting it in this world: its ſatisfactions are ſhort, and uncertain: its calamities moſt certain, moſt durable. Whilſt on the other ſide, every Virtue has its good Angel, is ſurrounded with ſome viſible luſter, ſome worldly advantage. Some bring health, ſome wealth, ſome power, ſome fame, ſome contentment; a good at leaſt equal to any of the other. But *Righteouſneſs and Mercy* united bring them all together. You ſee they freely offer to your poſſeſſion, they will plentifully ſhower into your boſoms all the ſweetneſs, and tranquillity of life, all the ſplen-

dor,

dor, and abundance of a life, that is honorable.

All this they are here enabled to do, by the gift of a Divine Promiſe: This in truth for the moſt part, they cannot but do, by natural effect, and conſequence. For towards a ſecure, and happy life, Righteouſneſs does very much: Mercy perfects what the other leaves undone. Righteouſneſs makes few, or no foes, none worth making friends: Mercy makes, or deſerves to make, all friends; friends even of foes. Righteouſneſs always commends you to good men, often defends you againſt wicked men; never juſtly provokes wicked men againſt you: Mercy moves, melts, reconciles, conquers even the wicked; by the moſt powerful kind of victory overcomes evil with good.

Rom. xii. 21.

What then, in all humane probability, may be reaſonably expected from ſuch inoffenſive juſtice, ſuch charming, ſuch diffuſive benignity, and compaſſion? what? but the juſtice, nay more, the thanks, the good will, and good offices of thoſe, who ſhall be righted by your juſtice? what? but the Prayers, the hearts, the lives, if need be, of thoſe who ſhall be preſerv'd by your mercy, or forgiven by your pity? All this from without: Beſides the comfortable aſſurance, and teſti-

teſtimony of a clear, and ſerene conſcience within: which only is able to make life ſweet, honor not a burden: nay it is able to make undeſerv'd diſgrace a comfort, and death it ſelf happy.

And certainly all this is life, and honor; this is praiſe and glory; if there be any true life, above a ſenſual, carnal life: if there be any ſubſtantial, laſting honor, above the periſhing ſhadows of it: if there be not only any Religion towards God, but if there be any thing true, and juſt, and honeſt, and lovely, and of good report; if there be any virtue, any praiſe amongſt men: if that be glory, which the very Heathens have defined to be the concurring eſteem, and commendation of the wiſe, and the good, beſtow'd on great men, not only, nor indeed chiefly, for their riches, or power; but rather for their clemency, and beneficence: perfections moſt proper to the upper part of mankind. And they can never do miſchief to the lower part, nay they can never be employ'd, but in doing good to the lower part of the world. God himſelf has ſaid, that *Great men are Gods*: yet it is not greatneſs alone, but mercy joyn'd with greatneſs, and ſtrengthen'd with Righteouſneſs, that can make them ſo.

Yet

Yet becauſe it may ſo happen, by the ſecret diſpoſal of the all-wiſe Governor of all things, that *Righteouſneſs, and Mercy* may ſometimes fail of a Temporal Reward: becauſe that may come to paſs, which yet *David* profeſſes never to have ſeen from his youth to his old age, *that the righteous man may be forſaken, and his ſeed beg their bread*, or want an eaſie ſubſiſtence of life: nay, becauſe the merciful man may come ſhort of his juſt recompence of honor here below: therefore there is ſtill behind a ſufficient reſerve, an unmeaſurable compenſation, in the other more heavenly ſenſe of the words *life*, and *honor*: which, as ſure as God is true, will be, are the undoubted portion of the righteous, and merciful man.

Pſalm xxxvii. 25.

That life, that honor, *which eye has not ſeen, nor ear heard*, nor hath it enter'd into the tongue of man to expreſs, or heart to conceive, that is the moſt worthy ſubject of all our thoughts, that ought to be the chief end of all our deſigns. Elſe our deſigns may be ſpeciouſly honorable; they may be for life in a low ſenſe, rather indeed for livelihood than life; only to ſupport a life, that is but for a moment ſupportable: But they can never elſe promote our true life; they can never elſe be truly profitable, much leſs truly honorable.

Our

Our gracious God indeed permits, nay, he encourages you all, in the proſecution of the *life*, and *honors* of this world. His Laws have very many precepts of true humility, but no levelling principles in them, no more than yours have. Diſtinctions of dignity, different advantages of life, degrees of honor do very well agree with the greateſt purity, ſtrictneſs, and ſimplicity of the Goſpel: no doubt therefore they muſt be conſiſtent with the freeneſs, and largeneſs, and generoſity of Chriſtianity.

God ſuffers mankind to be provok'd, and excited to Virtue, by all manner of arguments, by ſecular, as well as by ſpiritual promiſes; by temporal, as well as by eternal hopes. He allows you all the ſober purſuit of the moderate delights, and plenty of this life: They are his gift, if you obtain them. He is, no doubt, well pleas'd with your earneſt endeavours after excellency, in any kind of wiſe counſel, or uſeful knowledg, or worthy action. The honors you reap thereby, he confers upon you: of the good you do thereby, you your ſelves have the principal advantage.

Give me leave therefore to add; All theſe our other deſigns ſhould ſo be proportion'd, that being good in themſelves, they be not made ill by

their abuſe, or exceſs: all our thoughts of this worlds *life*, and *honors* ſhould be ſo order'd, as neither to depreſs our minds too much, by the cares of this *life*, nor to raiſe them too high, by the *honors* of this world: rather they ſhould be employ'd, to aſſiſt our ſouls, and give them wings, in riſing higher to ſupernatural expectations; to a *life*, to *honor* immortal; to carry up our contemplations, to fix our affections on Heaven, on that proſpect above, which is the laſt bound of the very eyes of our Bodies; how much more ought it to be the laſt object of the eyes of our minds!

And if that *life*, that *honor* ſhall be at the bottom of all your hearts, ſhall be the beginning and end of all your pains, and ſtudies, if by *Righteouſneſs*, *and Mercy* you ſhall aſpire towards them, you cannot come ſhort of them. This way you ſhall find as near, and as ſure a paſſage to Heaven, from the midſt of your earthly buſineſs, and worldly Employments, conſcientiouſly, and piouſly, righteouſly, and mercifully managed, as any other man has reaſon to expect from the greateſt retirement of a ſolitary Devotion.

I ſpeak this on good authority. For thus the holy Scripture it ſelf diſpenſes the joys of Heaven. In the whole courſe of the Goſpel, eternal glory

glory is as much, at leaſt as much, enſured to the juſt, and charitable virtues, and graces of an active life, and of a publick ſtation in this world, as to any other part of all contemplative, or practical Religion.

Whatever imaginations ſome men may have concerning the true way, and gate, that leads to celeſtial happineſs: which men have been always too ready to open to themſelves, and to thoſe of their own parties, and opinions; too quick in ſhutting it upon all others: too many uſurping an authority of brandiſhing the terrors of Gods Juſtice, and of ſcattering the aſſurances of his Mercy, when, and where they pleaſe; which were neither of them ever committed to their diſtribution: yet whatever claim ſuch men may make to the joys of Heaven: ſome pretending to them only by the free Grace, without regarding the precepts of the Goſpel: ſome only by relying on ſingle Faith, and vilifying of Charity: ſome by great ſcruples in little things, and far leſs care of great things: ſome by cenſuring of other mens lives, and putting as many as they can, under a ſtate of Damnation; by being more againſt other mens Religions, than for their own: yet undoubtedly none of theſe is the way. Theſe are all miſtaken, unrighteous, unmerci-

ful ways. The only true way to Heaven, which God himſelf has traced out, which Chriſt himſelf does often point at, though it be narrow, yet it is a direct, not a croſs way: though it be ſtrait, yet it is paſſable, and has a gate always open. And what is this way? what this gate? It is not a diſputing, contentious, comparing, cenſorious, but a mild, peaceable, righteous, merciful way. And this it is, By the mercy of God the Father, *Chriſt made to us Righteouſneſs*: and that Mercy and this Righteouſneſs made effectual to us men by the aſſiſtance, and conſolations of God the Holy Ghoſt; and that received, by men with a lively, efficacious Faith; and that evidenc'd to be in men by ſuch effects, as moſt reſemble their Divine Original, ſuch as reſpect both God, and man: Which are true *Righteouſneſs, and Mercy* of men to one another, accompanied with unfeigned piety towards God.

Is there ſtill behind in my Text any more reward promiſed to the man, who follows after *Righteouſneſs, and Mercy?* Indeed can there be any more, than mortal life, and honor? life, and honor immortal? yes there is ſtill more. And it is that, you ſee, which is the cauſe of all the other Rewards. It is Righteouſneſs it ſelf. *He that followeth after Righteouſneſs, and Mercy, findeth*

findeth life, righteouſneſs, and honor: which now, if you pleaſe, may be thus briefly paraphraſed. He that lives righteouſly, and mercifully towards men, if he ſhall practiſe theſe virtues humbly, and conſtantly; if he ſhall perform them ſo, as not at all to rely on their merit for ſalvation; if ſtill he ſhall find the want, and believe the efficacy, and lay hold on the benefit of our dear Redeemers more precious Righteouſneſs: he ſhall then partake of the fruits, and enjoy the happineſs, that is promiſed indeed to our *righteouſneſs, and mercy*, but was purchas'd only by our Saviours Righteouſneſs, and beſtow'd only by Gods mercy.

I am now arrived at the other more Evangelical ſignification of the word *Righteouſneſs*. But I come to it ſo late, that I cannot treat of it at large. And it is better to ſay nothing of it than too little. Only from this, and the reſt of my diſcourſe, I beg leave to preſent you farther with one ſhort obſervation; which perhaps will not be unſeaſonable, by me to be mention'd with all Submiſſion, by you to be received with favorable Interpretation.

You may perceive, that the true Doctrine, and Practice of *Righteouſneſs, and Mercy*, of mens *righteouſneſs, and mercy* to one another; of Gods

righteouſneſs, and mercy to men, had the ſame Divine Author, and example at firſt, the ſame courſe, and progreſs afterwards: and they are all along in Scripture repreſented under the ſame, or very like expreſſions. *Righteouſneſs, and Mercy* are the ſum of the Law in one ſenſe; they are the ſubſtance of the Goſpel in another. The only poſſible means and inſtrument, to ſecure, and preſerve the one of theſe, is Civil Government: The only way to teach, and maintain the other is Religion.

What now may be fairly concluded from all this? Certainly, that as theſe two moſt admirable things have themſelves ſo long, ſo well agreed in matter, and words, in growth, and increaſe; as they are both the beſt things in this world; ſo the means, and inſtruments of preſerving them both, are both moſt nearly united in intereſt, and ought to be ſo in mutual affections, and aſſiſtance.

Certainly when God himſelf choſe his firſt Law-giver, and his firſt High-Prieſt, out of the ſame Family; when he appointed *Moſes* and *Aaron* two Brethren of the ſame houſe, to be his principal Miniſters of Juſtice, and Piety: it was not by chance, it was not for want of choice. But there was even then ſome myſtical intention,

on, and that was even then a happy preſage, that between the true Righteouſneſs, and the true Religion, there ſhould, in all ſucceeding Ages be nouriſh'd a perpetual League, and Alliance, offenſive and defenſive: that, as God himſelf expreſſes it, *Aaron might be to Moſes inſtead of a mouth; Moſes to Aaron inſtead of God.*

And is there not ſtill the ſame reaſon, for the ſame entire union between both theſe things among us, as there was then among Gods own people? have they not both the ſame ſtrengths, and dangers, the ſame hopes, and fears, the ſame friends, and enemies, the ſame friends in Heaven, and Earth, the ſame enemies in Earth, and Hell?

The common adverſaries of both may begin againſt Religion, as, God knows, in moſt of our memories, they did. But did not then, and will not always, the ruine of Righteouſneſs ſuddenly follow the overthrow of Religion? In all, or moſt of the ſeditious practices, tumults, and confuſions among us, the falſe cauſe of God has been firſt pretended, the true cauſe of God firſt ſtruck at: and next to that immediately a falſe Juſtice has been made a colour to ſupplant the true Juſtice: The Church has been always attempted firſt to be removed,

that

that they might come at the State the more eaſily.

Can there be then a more powerful argument to unite us all in preventing the like miſchiefs, than our common danger? Can there be a better guide to admoniſh us all how to prevent them, than our common experience?

I profeſs I ſpeak this, not only as a neceſſary caution for the time to come, but as well in juſt acknowledgment of what is paſt. For as we have reaſon to thank the enemies of our Religion, on all ſides, when they upbraid us, as they often do, that ours is a meer State-Religion, becauſe the intereſt of our Church has been always, ever ſince its Reformation, inſeparable from that of the Civil Government: Which we freely grant, and muſt always aſſert, as that by which we ſhall ſtand, or fall; nay by which, through the bleſſing of God, we ſhall always ſtand: ſo we muſt declare to all the world, that next to the Scripture it ſelf, and the genuine Interpretation of it by the ancient Chriſtian Writers, and the uninterrupted uſe of the beſt, and pureſt Ages of Chriſtianity; next theſe, the great Eſtabliſhment, and Strength of the Church of *England*, is the protection of the Crown, and the ſtability of our Civil Government, and Laws.

Laws. And thus far we confeſs, ours is a State-Religion: Our Church was Reform'd by Authority of the State: and above all its enemies, it beſt provides for the ſecurity of the State.

Wherefore, in the name of God, as the beſt way to fruſtrate all our enemies hopes againſt our Church and State; which will be the moſt ſolid anſwer to all their little objections, let us all unanimouſly perſevere, in our ſeveral ſtations, to pray for, and obey, to ſtrengthen and defend one of the moſt moderate, the wiſeſt, the moſt pious frames of Religion, that ever Chriſtians enjoy'd ſince the Primitive Age; one of the beſt, the freeſt, the moſt happy conſtitutions of Civil Government, that ever mankind enjoy'd ſince the Creation. May we all agree in this undeniable truth, that whoever would ſubvert the State, they are mortal enemies to Religion: whoever would deſtroy Religion, they are equally enemies to the State. To both let us *be ſubject, not only for wrath, but for conſcience ſake*: And the more *for Conſcience ſake*, becauſe ſo very little, or no wrath, ſo much of Juſtice, and Mercy is to be found in them both. Rom. xiii.

May therefore *Juſtice, and Piety, Mercy, and Truth meet together, that Glory may dwell in our*

Land: may Righteousness, and Peace always kiss each other among us. May the Counsels, and persons, that advance, and protect both in the Nation, be inviolably united in *Righteousness and Mercy*: may they for ever prosper with *Life* and *Honor*. *AMEN.*

FINIS.